
From: The Modern World Global History since 1760 Course Team
Sent: Sunday, February 24, 2013 7:20 PM
To: jeepproject@yahoo.com
Subject: Starting Week 7

Dear jeffrey epstein,

Welcome, again, to the hundreds of students who joined the class in the past week. You can certainly catch up.

The upcoming week, Week 7, will wrap up the first half of the course. By the time you finish we will have surveyed a period of about one hundred and fifty years of world history, from the mid-1700s into the early 1900s.

Weeks 1, 2, and 3 set the stage for great change. Weeks 4, 5, and 6 describe the resulting transformation of the world. Week 7 is a major pivot point. It focuses on a period between about 1890 and 1910 of a "great acceleration." In effect, the first wave of changes have been experienced and digested, for better or worse. A new situation has arisen.

Then came a further period of transition, which I tend to locate in the 1870s and 1880s, out of which emerges a series of new choices that — taken together — strongly define the contours of the world we can recognize today. The principal political ideas turn into ideologies, which turn into mass political parties. Almost all the major political movements and parties we recognize today take their characteristic form in the period coming out of that transition and becoming fully fledged by the 1890s.

The principal institutions of modern commerce and economic life — from standardized money to large corporations — also take form during this period. The same is true for the principal kinds of educational institutions — government-built primary schools, many more universities, the rise of specialized higher education (doctoral degree programs).

The principal discoveries and advances in applying many of the more 'invisible' sciences — chemistry, biology (including germs and genes), electricity — also are traceable to this period.

All this seemed to thoughtful observers at the time — from Henry Adams to Vladimir Lenin — to amount to a kind of "great acceleration."

So Week 7 is an important week. Not just about more change, but about the momentum of change on a global scale. And the great intensification of all these forces will produce a series of monumental struggles — even questions, for the first time, about whether humanity itself could cope with the forces it was setting in motion, trying to wield. If you have seen it, by the end of the week you may recall (in a more light-hearted spirit) the Disney cartoon (ca. 1940, from the movie "Fantasia") in which Mickey Mouse is the sorcerer's apprentice.

Best wishes,

Philip Zelikow

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